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AS WRITTEN

STATEMENT

BY

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MINISTER OF HEALTH

AND

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

AND

HEAD OF DELEGATION OF

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

ON

ITEM 8

CAIRO

6 SEPTEMBER 1994

Mr. President, Mme. Secretary General, distinguished delegates,
ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the people and government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to express our sincere wishes for the success of this important meeting and our greetings to all those present here in Cairo. Joining the previous speakers, I would also like to express our appreciation to the people and Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for their kind hospitality and for graciously hosting the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Mr. President,

The Plans of Action from the two previous world conferences on population have been extremely useful for the development and management of population policies in many countries. It is also fitting that we meet in 1994, the International Year of the Family, since our deliberations will revolve around the issues of the family and its place in today's and tomorrow's society. Our current concerns are now more far-reaching than those faced originally in Bucharest in 1974. In the years since then, the world has undergone unprecedented developments of many kinds-political, economic and social, together with wide-ranging demographic changes. Most countries are adopting national population policies and we are now witnessing some of the benefits of such actions. With these efforts, the world population growth rate has significantly declined over the last decade.

Despite global efforts to resolve population issues, we can see

that the problems still exist and are becoming more complex. The growing synergy between population, environment and development, the rapid increase in international migration, and the spread of AIDS have added greater complexity to the population issues, which more than ever require the concerted response of the international community. Thus, greater efforts will be required in the future and into the next century to ensure that what we have gained is not lost and what has yet to be done is achieved successfully by working together in the spirit of true international cooperation.

In line with this cooperation, we believe that the ICPD will greatly contribute to the resolutions of the population issues.

My delegation is confident that the Programme of Action to be adopted in this conference will serve as the guidebook for tackling population related issues in the years to come.

In addition, we would like to request that the UNFPA and the entire UN system as well as Member States, take more action-oriented measures to ensure the full implementation of the Programme of Action which will improve the quality of life for each and every member of the human family on this planet.

Mr. President,

At this juncture, I would like to briefly introduce my country's experiences concerning its population and development policies over the last three decades.

The population policy in the Republic of Korea evolved primarily in response to the high population growth rate in the early 1960s. At

that time, the Korean government was strongly aware that, without a suitable population control policy, it could not achieve economic development quickly. Under these circumstances, the government decided to adopt a national family planning programme as an integral part of the successive Five Year Economic Development Plans from 1962.

The successful implementation of the series of Economic Development Plans resulted in a stable rate of economic growth of 8 percent per annum during the last three decades. This has contributed to higher levels of income, increased access to education, improvement in the status of women, and changes in the role of the family.

With the socio-economic development, the nation's total fertility rate dropped dramatically from 6.0 in 1960 to 1.6 in 1990, which was below replacement-level fertility.

This fertility rate change was not only due to the vigorous family planning programme, but also to the various socio-economic changes that took place over the period. The 1994 population of 44.5 million is projected to stabilize by the year 2021.

Industrialization has been accompanied by urbanization and rural-to-urban migration. The rate of urbanization increased from 28 percent in 1960 to 74 per cent in 1990, and by the year 2000 it is expected to be 80 per cent. During the last three decades, Korea has experienced much higher population concentration in large cities, particularly in the Seoul metropolitan area. This population concentration has resulted in chronic overpopulation in urban areas as well as unequal regional development.

Mr. President,

I would also like to mention two elements regarding the status of women in Korea which seem to have been significant in determining the fertility rate during the past 30 years: education and employment. The average number of years of education in 1990 was 8.2 years for women, which was an increase from 5.3 years of 1960. We expect this trend to continue. With the rapid economic growth, modernization, and urbanization, the average size of households has also decreased, and there has been considerable improvement in labor force participation by women in Korea. Recently, the government has taken many progressive steps to enhance women's work participation in many more social and economic activities.

For example, the government has been promoting day-care services as a primary project in the area of social welfare to meet the increasing demand. Also, a growing number of firms and government institutions are providing child day-care facilities to attract married women as employees.

Mr. President,

The last 30 years of Korea's experience in population policy clearly demonstrates that population programmes can only succeed when they are part of a development strategy, when priority is placed on investing in people, and when women are empowered through education to play a key role in determining family size and in reducing infant, child and maternal mortality.

Korea's population and family planning programmes can be described as very successful and be used as models for other developing countries. Today, Korea is proud to be able to share her experience and knowledge

on population policy and economic development through the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), which was established in 1991 for technical cooperation among developing countries. We will continue to participate actively in multilateral and bilateral cooperation with the UN agencies and other organizations involved in population and development programmes. As a part of these efforts, my government will host "A Symposium on Issues Related to Sex Preference for Children in the Rapidly Changing Demographic Dynamics in Asia" in Seoul this November in collaboration with UNFPA.

Mr. President,

The government of the Republic of Korea would like to reiterate its support to the basic principles and goals set out in the draft ICPD Programme of Action. We also know that this Conference is not the conclusion but only the beginning of our work and that much more remains to be done. As you are well aware, no sooner do we overcome a set of problems than are we faced with a whole new stream of challenges of an entirely different nature. For example, the world of today must now cope with new issues such as flight from marriage and parenthood, imbalance of sex ratios at birth, labor shortages and international migration.

However, I am confident that the discussions at this meeting will help us to establish our goals and strategies, to even tackle these difficult issues. Through working together at this forum, we hope to contribute to resolving the population and development issues, which will confront all of us in the twenty-first century.

Thank you,

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